

the 'Natural History of Egypt and Palestine'*, is highly appropriate, as its loud voice is the first point that strikes the observer. Two out of the three specimens mentioned in the above work were obtained in the neighbourhood of Damietta; the third from the shores of the Red Sea.

Rüppell does not appear to have met with this Reed-warbler, as it is not mentioned in his work, and it seems probable that the species will prove to be extremely local.

As I am likely to be in Damietta again in the course of next spring, I hope to be able to supply the readers of 'The Ibis' with more full and accurate particulars respecting the habits, &c., of this curious little bird, and to obtain a good series of specimens.

VI.—On the *Didunculus strigirostris*, or *Tooth-billed Pigeon* from Upōlo. By E. P. RAMSAY.

It appears that the Tooth-billed Pigeon (*Didunculus strigirostris*) of the Navigator Islands is not quite extinct, as has been supposed; and many of your readers will be glad to learn that a living specimen of this peculiar bird has been brought to Sydney from Upōlo, one of that group of islands, by Mr. Williams, H.B.M. Consul. Mr. Williams has kindly allowed me to examine his specimen several times, and has given me the following information respecting its habits.

The *Didunculus*, or *Enalleodea*, is known by the natives under the name of *Manu-mèa*, and was at one time very plentiful on the islands, especially upon Upōlo, where, in August 1862, Mr. Williams obtained his bird. Owing, however, to the number of cats which now infest the island, the *Manu-mèa* has become almost extinct.

* Hempr. et Ehr. Symb. Phys., Aves, fasc. i. :—

"*Curruca stentorea*, H. & E. Specimina 3 adsunt, unum Damiaticum Ægypti inferioris, duo Maris Rubri meridionalis. Habitu et colore *Curruca* (*Sylvia*) *turdoidi* simillima, sed paullo inferior, sexpollicaris, remigum 2^{da} quam 5^{ta} aut 6^{ta} minore, rostro longiore, pedibus gracilioribus. *C. turdoides* differt, statura majore, remigum 2^{da} et 3^{ta} longissimis, pedibus validioribus, longioribus, rostro brevior et paullo altior. Plura alibi."

The natives also had a great share in its destruction; for as long as this Pigeon could be procured in considerable numbers, they were in the habit of making annual excursions into the mountains for the sole purpose of catching and feasting on the *Didunculus*. The natives used bird-lime, made from the gum of the breadfruit-tree mixed with oil, to secure the birds, or caught them in nets by making use of a decoy *Manu-mèa* kept for the purpose.

The *Didunculus* is strictly a ground-Pigeon, giving a decided preference to the thickly wooded sides of the mountains, where, when plentiful, they assemble in flocks of from ten to twenty in number, feeding upon berries and wild fruits, their favourite food being the mountain-plantain. On taking flight, they make a great flapping, which has given rise to the native saying, "As noisy as a *Manu-mèa*." The only note observed by Mr. Williams (and which I myself have since heard) is a very low plaintive cry, something like that of a young chick, repeated only once or twice.

The head, neck, and upper part of the chest are of a dull slate-blue colour, the feathers on the back of the head and neck and on the lower sides of the neck having a gloss of metallic green in some lights. The lower part of the chest, breast, and abdomen are of a dull slaty brown; the edges and under sides of the wings and the under tail-coverts are of a dark brown. The scapular region is brown, the centre and edges of the feathers being chestnut, as are the short feathers on the wings, with the exception of the very short feathers covering the primary quills, which are a dull dark brown. The upper parts of the outer webs and tertiaries are chestnut; the rest of the tertiaries and the secondaries are dark brown. The back is of a deep-chestnut tint; the upper tail-coverts a dull dark brown, centred and margined broadly with chestnut. The tail is of a deep chestnut, the outer feathers being the shortest, and their inner webs being brown. Some of the tail-feathers of this specimen are missing, but I believe it had originally fourteen in all.

The bill is of a bright deep flesh-colour, with a slight tint of orange, becoming light flesh-colour at the inner edges of the mandibles, and almost light horn-colour at the tip of the upper

mandible, which has besides a dark line down the margin. The eyelids and cere (or what answers to the latter) are flesh-colour; the iris of a rich dark brown, the centre of the eye being black. The legs and feet are of a deep flesh-colour, the claws almost white; and the tarsi have a few scales in front, the rest being bare, with a smooth skin.

The bird is quite a young specimen, and still has a patch of light-brown feathers on the side of the head and throat, through which can be discerned a few feathers of the new plumage*.

VII.—*Remarks on the Habits, Distribution, and Affinities of the Genus Pitta.* By ALFRED R. WALLACE.

THE beautiful birds which are now generally included in the single genus *Pitta* have lately been monographed by Mr. Elliot, and have also been the subject of an article by Prof. Schlegel in the 'Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle des Pays-Bas,' as well as of a monograph forming the first part of a work entitled 'Les Oiseaux des Indes Néerlandaises,' while the first volume of Mr. Jerdon's 'Birds of India' gives an accurate account of the species inhabiting that country. The time therefore seems appropriate for generalizing the information contained in these works as to the geographical range of the several species, and for giving a few observations on the habits of those which I myself met with in the Malay Archipelago.

The Pittas, or Ground-Thrushes, are a group of insectivorous birds which inhabit the forests of the Eastern tropics, and are generally adorned with brilliant and strongly contrasted colours. The rich blues and crimsons, the delicate greens, yellows, and purples, the velvety black and pure white (three of which tints at least generally adorn each species) remind one of the Tanagers of South America; and, in fact, these two groups are almost the only ones which have no one characteristic tint or style of dress,

* Dr. Bennett's latest letters to the Secretary of the Zoological Society (read at the Meeting on the 10th November last) announce the arrival in Sydney of a second living specimen of the *Didunculus*; and that, with his usual liberality, he had purchased the pair for the Society, and was intending to send them to England by the first convenient opportunity.—ED.